

AMENDMENT TO THE SPECIFICATION

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 14, line 11, with the following rewritten paragraph:

The above block layout is common to all BLOHs for signals utilizing VPNs operate according to the protection switching methodology of the invention. Hitless network operation is disclosed in the U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 09/249,001, filed February 12, 1999, now U.S. Patent No. []6,426,941, the entire disclosure of which is expressly incorporated herein by reference.

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 16, line 14, with the following paragraph:

Organization of management channels is depicted in **FIG. 4**. VPN1n and VPN2n are the management channels for operation of the network. Block overheads ("BLOH") of VPN11 through VPN1n-1 are transmitted on a first management channel **90**, while BLOHs of VPN21 through VPNn-1 are transmitted on a second management channel ~~400~~ **92**.